
The Irish Dramatic Revival

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1928 avec les masques d'Hildo Van Krop et la musique de George Antheil ; faut-il pour autant comparer les mégaphones utilisés pour la pièce à ceux des séances à la Golden Dawn ? Il fut difficile à Yeats d'établir l'empathie nécessaire entre scène et public. *At the Hawk's Well* et *Fighting the Waves* n'eurent pas le succès escompté en partie parce que le public, habitué au théâtre de l'époque, n'était pas initié au nô.

Ce livre témoigne d'une excellente connaissance du théâtre de Yeats ; on peut regretter que le rôle déterminant de Gordon Craig ne soit que rapidement mentionné, même si son importance est évoquée dans d'autres écrits. P. Longuenesse connaît parfaitement les problèmes posés par la représentation. Ses analyses minutieuses seront appréciées des metteurs en scène. Réjouissons-nous aussi de l'annonce de futures publications.

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Anthony ROCHE, *The Irish Dramatic Revival 1899-1939*, London, Bloomsbury, 2015, 272 p., ISBN : 978-1-4081-7528-6.

Anthony Roche's new book provides a compact history of the Irish dramatic movement from the first year of the Irish Literary Theatre, initiated by Yeats, Lady Gregory and Edward Martyn, to Yeats's death. Thus Yeats is construed as the tutelary figure of what Roche refers to as the "Irish dramatic revival", yet the book usefully opens up the canon and incorporates discussions of playwrights not often mentioned in the context of the Revival, such as G.B. Shaw and Teresa Deevy. It also broadens the scope to look at those theatrical experiments which took place on other stages than that of the Irish National Theatre, giving ample space to Yeats's experiments with dramaturgical arrangements which were intended for intimate spaces in the 1910s and 20s, and to such initiatives as the Dublin Drama League and the beginnings of the Gate Theatre.

The first chapter, "the Late Nineteenth Century", sets the context for the emergence of the dramatic movement. Commenting on the influence of Douglas Hyde's pioneering work as translator and scholar of the native Irish literary tradition, Roche makes the decisive point that "there was no native Irish drama to develop", so that a canon had to be created to refute the stage Irish stereotypes conveyed on the English stage and in the melodramas of Boucicault, which had been immensely popular but were violently rejected by the intellectual elite who took up the task of representing the "authentic" Ireland during the Revival. The chapter situates Wilde and Shaw as the contemporary luminaries of the Anglo-

Irish theatrical tradition initiated by Farquhar, Goldsmith and Sheridan, then goes on to devote a substantial section to the influence of Ibsen on Irish drama, usefully revising common assumptions about Yeats's and Synge's alleged abhorrence of his brand of naturalism. The chapter closes with a brief evocation of the three-year experiment of the Irish Literary Theatre, which served to ascertain that "Irish playwrights could write plays on native subjects and have those plays produced in their own country".

The following chapters are devoted to each of the major figures of the dramatic revival, respectively the early Yeats (from *Cathleen ni Houlihan* to the first *Plays for Dancers*), Synge, Shaw, Gregory and O'Casey, and offer detailed readings of a selection of plays. Among particularly compelling passages are Roche's tracing of Shakespearean echoes in *On Baile's Strand*, and his reading of the onstage audience in Synge's *Playboy* as the reflection of the offstage, non-fictional audience. The chapter devoted to Shaw focuses specifically on the three plays which Shaw intended for the Abbey stage, explicitly or otherwise, namely *John Bull's Other Island* (which was initially rejected by the Abbey and premiered at London's Royal Court Theatre), *The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet* and *O'Flaherty, V.C.* (which was never staged at the Abbey), and the latter is fruitfully read as anticipating some of the thematic and formal preoccupations of O'Casey's *The Silver Tassie*. The chapter about Lady Gregory forcefully challenges the notion (first circulated by Yeats himself) that she was a minor, essentially comic playwright, and brings out the radical political potential in *Spreading the News*, *The Gaol Gate*, *The Rising of the Moon* and especially *Grania*, which Roche reads as a fierce feminist play with a daring queer twist (though the word is never used). Chapter 6 convincingly makes a case for the inclusion of the *Tassie* within a "Dublin quartet" (comprising also O'Casey's three Abbey plays, usually read as a trilogy). Chapter 8, "The Revival from O'Casey to the death of Yeats" (1928-39) traces the beginnings of the Gate theatre, and includes a reading of Denis Johnston's début play *The Old Lady Says "No!"* in that context; it offers an important study of Teresa Deevy's decisive contribution to the formation of the National Theatre and ends with a reading of Yeats's late plays, in a section astutely entitled "Yeats's Endgame" which pays particular attention to the line of influence between Yeats's *Purgatory* and Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*.

The final chapter, "Critical Perspectives", offers exciting essays by two major commentators on the theatre and performative culture of the period. Paige Reynolds compellingly revises the widely-spread assumption that Irish theatre was predominantly text-based until the turn of the twentieth century, when it made a transition towards physical theatre and performance, and shows instead that a vibrant performative tradition existed during the Revival, which included sports, dancing, political protests, and such institutionalised events as the *Tailteann*

Games in the 1920s, the Dublin Civic Weeks staged in 1927 and 1929, and the 1932 Eucharistic Congress. P.J. Matthews usefully replaces Synge's drama in the context of the cultural debates which were prominent during his brief writing career, which revolved around Celticism, the value of peasant culture, and the Irish language. The volume closes with an interview between Antony Roche and Conor McPherson, where the latter yields interesting insights about the difference between Irish and English worldviews, but rather disappointingly reiterates the banal and questionable claim that theatre should not be concerned primarily with politics.

The book is a very valuable introduction to the study of the theatre of the Revival, which engages with the most recent research and offers clear, challenging close readings of the prominent plays of the period, as well as providing ample contextual material.

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Owen McGEE, *Arthur Griffith*, Sallins, Merrion Press, 2015, 536 p., ISBN : 978-1-78537-009-0.

Si l'on s'en tient à la première page, le titre de l'ouvrage pourrait paraître trompeur. En effet, seuls les quatre premiers chapitres semblent s'attacher de près à des moments clés de la vie d'Arthur Griffith : son enfance dans les quartiers pauvres de la capitale (expliquant ses prises de position futures en faveur de l'amélioration des conditions de logement *via* la rétention d'une partie des sommes versées au Trésor britannique), sa formation politique et ses années de journalisme en Afrique du Sud, puis son retour en Irlande comme éditeur du journal *The United Irishman* avant la parution de *The Resurrection of Hungary* et la fondation du *Sinn Féin* en 1905. Mais, c'est là où s'opère le tour de force d'Owen McGee. En effet, dans la seconde partie de l'ouvrage, l'auteur parvient à mener en parallèle une biographie d'Arthur Griffith et une étude du mouvement nationaliste irlandais entre les années précédant le troisième projet de *Home Rule* et celles conduisant aux négociations pour le traité de Londres, en passant par le soulèvement de Pâques. En s'appuyant sur un minutieux travail d'archives, tant en Irlande qu'au Royaume-Uni, ainsi que sur de nombreuses autres sources primaires sur la période, comme en attestent les quelques cent vingt pages de notes, l'ouvrage propose une analyse stimulante du mouvement nationaliste irlandais. Il souligne ainsi avec finesse les tensions qui traversent et structurent le mouvement